

Mayor Sullivan's Address to the Braintree Town Council
February 8, 2011

OUR STORY

We enter the fourth year of our new form of government in the midst of a tediously slow economic recovery, facing the third consecutive year with a reduction in unrestricted local aid. In spite of these difficult times, we have achieved a great deal and, thus, have a story to tell — a good story. One of progress, pragmatism and perseverance. We in Braintree have demonstrated productivity largely through our common will and our common sense. We have consolidated our workforce, cut spending when necessary and cultivated economic redevelopment that has brought new dollars and enhanced our town.

Having spent the last three years planning, planting, paving and most recently plowing. Having crafted budgets that maintained high quality services but stayed within our means and raised our bond rating. Having negotiated fair sustainable collective bargaining agreements. And having successfully completed the first state-funded school construction project in three decades. It would be acceptable to some in these difficult times to put our collective progress on hold. Others look at the results of our work and the increase in our reserves and think that we have made all the difficult choices required to put hard times behind us.

But this evening as we briefly pause to acknowledge our achievements we must also acknowledge the seriousness of the challenges we continue to face. We must remain steadfast and continuously focused in our resolve to improve upon our new government.

Our financial situation is admittedly better than many communities. We have not closed a fire station or laid-off a police officer or a teacher. Our efforts to promote economic development in our community

have yielded additional tax revenues that have cushioned the impact of the reductions in state aid.

Moreover, our partnership with Braintree Electric Light utilizing the town's superior bond rating to allow BELD to save millions in finance cost on the construction of the new Watson generator provides the town with an enhanced PILOT payment - a true win-win deal - has also provided a level of financial security.

Yet, our successful revenue enhancement efforts are in contrast to the reduction in revenue that the state has experienced. We have seen reductions in unrestricted local aid in the amount of \$2.3 m since FY09 and wholesale abandonment of Quinn Bill funding. We also must recognize that the federal stimulus funding that helped sustain our schools will be expended by the end of this fiscal year. We have additional contractual costs and obligations to our employees. We negotiated in good faith and we will live up to our commitments.

Thus, our current circumstances require our continued fiscal discipline. This is not to say we should not embark on new initiatives, as we have with the planned renovation of four schools this summer, new athletic fields at our high school, the commencement of construction of the Petersen Pool and skating rink and the establishment of an all-day kindergarten program. Moreover, from the purchase of acreage in the Highlands for the preservation of open space and a new neighborhood playground to the park enhancements we shall make at Watson Park and our shared improvements with Weymouth for the upgrading of the East Braintree/Weymouth Landing center, we are embarking upon an exciting time for our town from end to end.

As equally important as beginning new ventures, is taking a hard look at current operations, as we did with our relationship with Covanta on waste management, and in establishing a new office for our Veterans at our newly renovated building at the Dept. of Elder Affairs, to ensure they are lean and efficient. Wherever possible, we will look to reduce or eliminate costs and inefficiency and use the

realized savings to fund our new endeavors. We have done this with the introduction of online bill paying and in reducing our health care costs by 500k over the past year through an innovative approach of health care management that could serve as a model for other municipalities to emulate.

None of these actions - improved financial and personnel management, the 100 Roads program, tree plantings, park improvements, school reconstructions, and maintaining our public safety staffing levels, have been easy – yet we have accomplished these tasks and many more.

Over the course of the past three years I have often quoted my mother, who when facing a task or a problem would often craft a solution that called for something old and something new. This practical open-minded approach - a mother's wisdom - counsels us to be captive to neither our past nor our future, but to draw upon both of them to meet our present needs. To be mindful of our daily requirements of working hard, thinking strategically, and planning in the long term interests of what is best for Braintree.

I believe this is the approach that will best serve Braintree. Where appropriate we will continue the tried and true. Where necessary we will embark on the cutting edge and the new. But make no mistake. Every effort we will make will be undertaken in the spirit of excitement and enthusiasm of which we are required to perform.

None of what we have been able to accomplish could have been achieved without your assistance and oversight as we have implemented our new government. And so tonight I wish to publicly thank the Town Council for your role in helping us all perform better. Additionally, I wish to express my deep appreciation for our Department Heads. Each one of them has offered leadership to their assignments as well as valuable advice to me. Each department – though singular – has made a contribution to the whole – and that has made our overall operation(s) a better one.

To each employee, the administrative personnel as well as the physical laborers, our public safety personnel, our teachers and to my executive team, I express my appreciation for your daily effort to make our town operate as efficiently as possible. We can always improve upon our performance and we should always try. To all our town board members, elected and appointed, thanks for stepping up and offering yourself in public service. To our business community, thanks for making Braintree a vibrant place.

Lastly, to the citizens of our town – a note of thanks and appreciation for caring about your community. Your interest and involvement through the many community organizations, neighborhood associations, youth sports leagues, environmental groups and PTO's and your attendance at public meetings to voice your concerns, gives great value to the importance of defining a quality community and the fabric of our town that we call home.

The past three years have been a time of new milestones for Braintree. A great endeavor of establishing and implementing a new government. A worthy and important venture with the work we have done – and the effort we shall make. I am optimistic and positively convinced that the year ahead and the years to come can be a limitless time of opportunity and great brightness for Braintree. Our star is rising. Let's keep reaching!